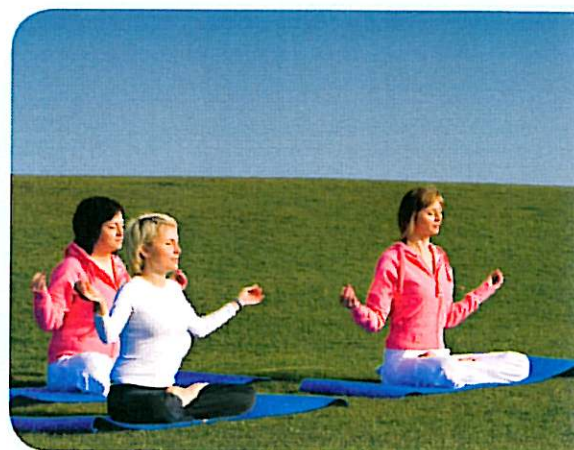


# BEAT CHRONIC STRESS, BOOST YOUR IMMUNITY



Backaches, headaches, allergies, irritable bowel syndrome, heart disease. Reduce your risk of all these conditions and more ... by chilling out. Research confirms the powerful and positive connection between the mind and body.

But stress challenges the mind-body connection by weakening your immune system and increasing your risk of illness.

The physical effects of stress can go beyond aches and pains. Chronic stress increases your risk of a host of problems, including:

- high blood pressure
- heart disease
- obesity
- depression
- colds, infections
- irritable bowel syndrome
- headaches
- flare-ups of autoimmune conditions

Being ill causes more stress, which creates a vicious cycle. But you have the power to stop this cycle with just four simple chill-out tips.

## Chill-out tip #1 – Seek information

Knowledge gives you a feeling you're in control. So the more you know, the more you can cope with stressful situations. For example, if a health condition causes you stress, put your energy into learning all you can:

- Look for [books](#) or [Websites](#) about the topic
- Browse the Health & Wellness section of [MyHumana](#), your password-protected, personal page on [Humana.com](#)
- Join a [support group](#) so you can find out what others have experienced
- Talk with [your doctor](#) about what's going on with your body

## Chill-out tip #2 – Tap into your inner resources

As hard as it may be, stay positive:

- [Look for the good things](#). For example, if you're stressed about work, think about friends you've made there, paychecks that haven't bounced, whatever it takes!
- [Manage your expectations](#). Negative feelings frequently stem from expecting perfection. Perfection is a myth. And try not to have many expectations of another's behavior.
- [Give up some control](#). Don't let things out of your control add to your stress. Stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic? Remind yourself that you can't do anything about the cars in front of you.
- [Try stress-management methods](#). Meditation and guided imagery – picturing yourself conquering the situation or escaping to a peaceful place – can stop negative feelings in their tracks. These techniques really can help people who are stressed about health problems.

(continued on next page)

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### Chill-out tip #3 – Lean on others

In stressful times, it's tempting to withdraw from others – physically, mentally, or both – but a lack of social support could actually make the situation worse.

- Keep your friends close. A network of friends can actually reduce your risk of depression and other stress-related illnesses.
- Avoid booze and junk food. Many people turn to alcohol, binge eating, and other addictive behaviors during stressful times. But these bad habits can hurt your health, and maybe cause more stress. Eat well, get plenty of sleep, and hang around people who will help you avoid unhealthy temptations.
- Find others in a similar situation. For health-related stress, for example, consider joining a support group, either in person or online. Whatever you're going through, don't go it alone. (And there's a support group for most everything!)

### Chill-out tip #4 – Listen to your belief system

If you find comfort in spirituality, tap into your beliefs. Spirituality includes getting in touch with your mind and reminding yourself that you're not always in control.

### Other chill-out techniques

In addition to the coping strategies above, consider other strategies that fall under the umbrella term of "mind-body medicine." According to the National Center on Complementary and Alternative Medicine, more than 30 percent of Americans use some kind of mind-body medicine – techniques that focus on the mind with the goal of promoting health. These include:

- Touch, such as therapeutic massage
- Relaxation, prayer, meditation, and guided visual imagery
- Exercises like yoga, karate, and tai chi
- Talk therapy and group support

For more stress-fighting ideas, log in to *MyHumana* on **Humana.com** and click on "Health & Wellness" and then "Wellness." You'll find "Stress Management" near the bottom of the page. You also may want to check the National Center on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Website at <http://nccam.nih.gov>.

### Bottom line:

The mind-body connection is powerful, and it's something you have the power to control. So, the next time you go to the doctor, be prepared to talk about what's going on in your mind, not just your body. And do some simple coping strategies to help you reduce the likelihood of expensive stress-related illnesses.